

1846 Coll

METHODISM IN SCOTLAND:

A BRIEF SKETCH

OF ITS

RISE, PROGRESS, AND PRESENT POSITION,
IN THAT COUNTRY.

BY DAVID WILSON.

ABERDEEN:

JOHN OGILVIE, A. BROWN & Co., G. & R. KING;

EDINBURGH: A. & C. BLACK, AND W. OLIPHANT;

GLASGOW: GEORGE GALLIE; LONDON:

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THE original intention of the writer of the following pages was simply to give a short exposition of his views regarding Methodism in this country, in reply to an affectionate address presented to him on his recent retirement from the offices of Circuit Steward and Leader, by his respected colleagues in the circuit meeting resident in Aberdeen, a vote of thanks and regret by the Leaders' Meeting, and a sympathising extract from the Minute Book of the Trustees of the Methodist Chapel in Aberdeen. But having yielded to the solicitation of some of these brethren, to give a fuller exposition of his views, in order to a more extended circulation, he now, with much diffidence, for the first time appears before the public through the press.

His great object is to direct attention to the urgent necessity that now exists for falling back upon the system designed and bequeathed to Scotland by the venerated founder of Methodism; and, should that object be promoted in any degree by this little publication, the author will be amply gratified.

D.W.

10, JOHN STREET, ABERDEEN,
12th March, 1850.

STATISTICS OF METHODISM IN SCOTLAND.

YEAR.	Circuits.	No of Preachers.	Supermrs.	Members.	YEAR.	Circuits.	No. of Preachers.	Supermrs.	Members.
1767	5	7		468	1809	9	19		1454
1768	3	6		482	1810	10	18		1506
1769	3	7		527	1811	13	19		1734
1770	3	7		581	1812	13	23		2038
1771	2	7		592	1813	12	24		2283
1772	2	9		703	1814	14	26		2613
1773	2	8		730	1815	14	25		2729
1774	2	8		735	1816	15	25		3094
1775	3	8		669	1817	15	27	2	3347
1776	3	9		570	1818	14	26	1	3656
1777	4	9		673	1819	13	25		3786
1778	3	7		614	1820	13	25		3227
1779	3	9		632	1821	14	23	1	3172
1780	4	9		553	1822	15	26	1	3125
1781	3	7		501	1823	13	20		3270
1782	3	8		459	1824	13	20		3254
1783	3	8		523	1825	13	21		3524
1784	4	8		481	1826	12	21		2783
1785	4	8		534	1827	11	21	1	2808
1786	4	8		677	1828	9	18	1	2713
1787	6	10		828	1829	11	16	2	2609
1788	6	12	1	918	1830	11	17	2	2573
1789	5	14	1	1088	1831	11	17	2	2527
1790	8	18		1086	1832	11	17	1	2674
1791	7	17	1	1173	1833	10	17	1	2947
1792	9	17	2	1284	1834	10	19	1	2971
1793	10	18	1	1313	1835	11	22	1	3009
1794	11	21		1179	1836	11	22	1	2897
1795	8	16		1198	1837	11	22	1	2785
1796	8	16	1	918	1838	11	21	1	2788
1797	7	15	1	1159	1839	11	20	1	2681
1798	7	15	1	1059	1840	11	20	2	2741
1799	6	18		1117	1841	10	18	2	2808
1800	7	13		1041	1842	10	18	1	2759
1801	7	13		1059	1843	11	18	1	2844
1802	8	13	1	1092	1844	11	18	1	2887
1803	7	16	1	1179	1845	12	19	1	3024
1804	8	16	1	1207	1846	12	19	1	2992
1805	6	16	1	1323	1847	12	20		2873
1806	6	15		1375	1848	12	20	1	2927
1807	6	15		1470	1849	12	20	2	2983
1808	6	14		1478					

On comparing this Table with the "Numerical Statistics of Wesleyan Methodism, by Bailey Hillyard, London, 1849," I find the number of members in Scotland, at present, stated by him as 4319, instead of 2983, as above. This disparity arises from his having included the numbers in the Shetland district with the Scotch districts, from its origin, in 1822, to the present date; and which addition sufficiently accounts for the far too flattering statement of the progress of Methodism in Scotland he has given in pages 26 and 27.

METHODISM IN SCOTLAND.

ON the breaking up of the Peterhead Circuit, in 1828, my attention was directed to the startling fact, unparalleled in the history of Methodism, that a continued succession of spiritual agency and pecuniary effort, for the greater part of a century, instead of bearing direct fruit in the stability and extension of the Church, had only resulted in such a decrease of Circuits, ministers, and members, as to threaten, at no distant day the withdrawal or extinction of Methodism in Scotland, unless this downward progress could be speedily arrested.

A sincere and heartfelt attachment to the doctrines and ordinances of Methodism, with a firm conviction of their peculiar adaptation to the spiritual exigencies of Scotland, led me earnestly to enquire what were the obstacles to their efficiency and progress in this country. From ministers and others whom I considered equally interested in this inquiry, I obtained the following as the probable causes of the want of success :—

1st, Methodism, as a spiritual system, is opposed to the genius of Scotland, and there exists no proper relationship between it and the national character.

2d, Our decided Arminianism renders us so unpopular as effectually to retard the spread of our Church in this country, where the mind is so imbued, by early training, with the Calvinistic theology.

3d, The obstacles are entirely owing to the dis-

tressing pecuniary embarrassments in which all the Circuits in Scotland have been plunged, by the imprudent building speculations from 1812 to 1820.

To the first and second of these causes I could not assent, as experience proved that, when Scotchmen in other countries, or even in this, came under the influence of Methodism, they have no peculiar repugnance to the reception and maintenance of its doctrines, &c.; while my memory reverted to the fact, that the ministers who had been the most popular and useful in this country were those who most fearlessly and openly preached the peculiar doctrines of an evangelical Arminianism, and from pulpit and press grappled with the prevailing Calvinism of the country, as V. Ward, &c. &c. I satisfied myself with the 3d reason assigned, viz., pecuniary embarrassment, and I anxiously looked forward to the period when this obstacle might be removed, until, on looking over the Minutes of Conference, Vol. I., page 191, I found the following statement by the Rev. J. Wesley,—“On considering the case of Scotland, where we had laboured for many years and had seen so little fruit of our labours, I at length consented to take the same step with regard to Scotland which I had with regard to America.” I well knew “the step” Mr. Wesley “took with regard to America;” he adapted Methodism to the peculiar circumstances of that new country, by founding the Methodist Episcopal Church which has there flourished so abundantly ever since. I therefore diligently renewed the inquiry, What “step” did Mr. Wesley “take with regard to Scotland” in 1785, and with what results? The only information I could procure from ministers and others, was to the effect, that Mr. Wesley at that time ordained his preachers stationed in Scotland, and allowed them to wear gown and bands.

From the utter impossibility of resting satisfied

with this answer, either as it regards Mr. Wesley or the sense of this country, I attempted to trace, from all available sources, the progress of Methodism in Scotland, from its introduction, about 1747, into Aberdeen, by Dr. Memyss, who had joined the Methodists when in Wrexham, and on his locating in Aberdeen had formed a little band, and requested assistance from Mr. Wesley, which does not appear to have been granted for several years. Though Edinburgh and Aberdeen appear in the minutes of 1749 as distinct Circuits then formed, yet it was not until one year and five months afterwards that he or any of his preachers visited this country; for, Mr. Chrisr. Hopper distinctly states, that "he was the first Methodist preacher who visited North Britain;* and this was on his accompanying Mr. J. Wesley to Musselburgh and Edinburgh, on 24th and 25th April, 1751, where Mr. Wesley preached and was "requested to stay with them a while." He promised that Mr. Hopper should return the following week and spend a few days with them, which he did, and appears to have gathered a small Society in each of these places; for, on Mr. Wesley's next visit, from 17th to 24th April, 1753, he found in Edinburgh "an open and effectual door, and not many adversaries." On this visit, he first preached in Glasgow, and formed a little Society there. I can find no record of any preacher having visited the small Society existing in Aberdeen until 1759, when Mr. Hopper, after preaching and forming a Society in Dundee, visited Aberdeen and Peterhead. During his stay in Aberdeen in this and the following year (1759, 1760,) he preached every morning at five o'clock, on the Castle Hill, where often, amid stones and dead animals flying around him, he invited his persecutors to "flee from the wrath to come," with a success that soon subdued all opposition. In 1761,

* Jackson's Lives of Early Methodist Preachers, Vol. I. p. 32.

Mr. Wesley first visited Aberdeen, and preached with great acceptance from the 2d to 7th April, in the College Court and halls. During this visit he added forty members, leaving ninety in Society, and appointed Mr. Thomas Olivers (author of the Hymns, "Lo, he comes with clouds descending," and, "The God of Abraham praise,") regularly to labour in Edinburgh, Dundee, and Aberdeen, where his labours were much blessed; as were also those of Messrs. Hopper, Hanby, Fugill, Kershaw, and Wm. Thomson, (the first elected President) during this and the three following years. Indeed, so many were joined together, that the want of Chapels was seriously felt, and especially in Aberdeen, where the Society had met for worship, &c. first in Barnett's Close, and then in a house on the north side of Queen Street, whence they removed to the Lodge Walk, until the erection of the octagon Chapel at the north east end of Queen Street, the foundation of which was laid by Mr. Hopper, prior to Mr. Wesley's visit, on 2d June, 1764. Next year (on the 24th April), Messrs Wesley and Hopper laid the foundation of the Calton Chapel, Edinburgh.

Up to this period, the progress of Methodism was most satisfactory wherever it had been introduced. Notwithstanding the small amount of agency employed (only four preachers being then stationed in Scotland), it made rapid advancement. Mr. Wesley and his preachers were generally esteemed; their congregations were large, and comprehended all classes of the community; persons of rank and title, rich and poor, heard and were profited, until this prosperity was blighted by the extensive circulation, during this year, 1765, of "Rev. James Hervey's Letters," with an extremely bitter preface against Mr. Wesley, by the Rev. Mr. Erskine, who, being highly respected throughout the country, by his strong recommendation of these letters, raised such a storm of ultra-Calvinistic controversy and opposition as effectually checked

the progress of Methodism for the next twenty years—from 1765 to 1785.

It is to be regretted that we have no means of estimating the exact extent of this check, as it was not until 1767, two years afterwards, that the numbers are first printed in the minutes of Conference, when we find in Scotland five Circuits, seven preachers, and 468 members, of whom 150 were in the Aberdeen Circuit. From 1767 to 1774, the number varied from 468 to 735, and from that year to 1784, they again decreased to 481, when the preachers requested Mr. Wesley either to withdraw them from Scotland, or to adapt Methodism to the pressing exigencies of the country, by allowing them to administer the sacraments, of which the Methodists were now generally deprived in the Established and Secession (or dissenting) Churches.

To meet this emergency, Mr. Wesley, in 1785, founded the "*The Methodist Church in Scotland*," conforming in externals with the Established Presbyterian Church of the country, the communion of the Lord's supper being the test, and a Metal Token the badge of Church membership. A number of Mr. Wesley's original Tokens, of which the annexed is a representation, are still used by the communicants (not members of Society), in the Aberdeen Chapel.



He preserved Class, Band, and Society Meetings, and the Love Feast, as privileges belonging to the members of the Society (within the Church), whose badge was the Quarterly Ticket. To carry out this plan he ordained Messrs. Hanby, Pawson, Taylor, &c., as ministers, and ordered them to wear gown and bands.

The success of these steps was soon apparent, for the number of Circuits, &c. rose from four Circuits and eight ministers, in 1784, to ten Circuits and eighteen ministers, in 1793, while the numbers in Society, exclusive of those who were members of the Church only (now termed communicants), rose from 481, in 1784, to 1,313, in 1793, when it was found to be cause of deep regret that Mr. Wesley had not consolidated the structure he had so wisely erected, by the formation of a Scotch Synod, connected with, yet distinct from, the English Conference, similar to the Irish Conference, which has preserved Methodism in that country amidst circumstances far more adverse than have or could have prevailed in Scotland; for, only two years after Mr. Wesley's decease, the Conference of 1793 ordered "the distinction between ordained and unordained ministers, and the wearing of gown and bands to be dropped." This rule was, doubtless, only meant for the English Societies, where the administration of the sacraments was not yet allowed, and considerable uneasiness and disaffection on that subject had begun to be manifested, which was considerably increased by the anomalous position of those ministers who had been ordained by Mr. Wesley to administer the sacraments in Scotland, and had returned to, and were stationed in, England.

The passing of this law struck the fatal blow to the Methodist Church in Scotland, founded by Mr. Wesley only eight years previous; for, the preachers who were appointed to Scotland, after this law, came not as ministers, but as preachers, and used every effort again to assimilate Scotch and English Methodism. One of the most earnest and persevering in this attempt was Mr. Alexander Kilham (the founder of the New Connexion Methodist Church in 1796), during his superintendency of the Aberdeen Circuit in 1792, 3, and 4. These efforts, combined with the rejection, by a majority of

twenty-two, in the Conference of 1797, of Dr. Coke's motion, to admit lay delegation in the District Meeting, actually laid the foundation of the Congregational Union for Scotland; as, immediately after the Conference of 1797, several leading members of the Church and Society in Aberdeen, headed by Mr. George Moir, not only protested, but seceded from the Methodist Church; and, instead of joining the New Methodist Connexion, which had been formed the year previous, on principles nearly approaching to what they had been contending for, so strong was the sense of wrong produced on their minds by Mr. Kilham's efforts while in Aberdeen, already referred to, that they applied to Dr. Bogue, English Independent, who speedily assisted them with preachers, the first of whom was Mr. (now Dr.) James Bennet of London. Their success was so encouraging that, early in the following year, 1798, they built George Street Chapel (Rev. Messrs. Thomson and Arthur's), to contain 1000 sittings. This was the first Congregational or Independent Church formed and the first Independent Chapel built in Scotland, where there are now about 100 churches, with nearly 9000 members.

It was not until 1805, a period of twelve years, that the number in Society again appeared as high as when the blow was struck in 1793; but the prudent working of the concessions of 1797, with the eminent usefulness of the ministers who were appointed during the succeeding twelve years, increased the Societies from six Circuits, sixteen ministers, and 1323 members, in 1805, to fifteen Circuits, twenty-seven ministers, and 3347 members, in 1817; while, in 1819, the members rose to 3786, the highest number ever reported in Scotland. Since that time they have declined so much, that, after the lapse of thirty years, during which the population of Scotland has increased fully more than one third, and what may be termed the Me-

thodistic population has, doubtless, from immigration from the manufacturing and mining districts of England, as well as from Ireland, into the West of Scotland, been more than doubled, Methodism in Scotland, instead of making inroads on the world, and thereby extending its boundaries, and increasing its members in proportion to the rising population, is not even keeping up its ranks and energy, by retaining its own baptised children, as a glance at the following table will shew.

*Comparative View of Methodism in Scotland, in
1819 and 1849.*

CIRCUITS.	No. in Society in		Increase.	Decrease.
	1819.	1849.		
Edinburgh,.....	655	559	0	96
Dunbar,.....	55	62	7	0
Glasgow,..... }	1620	897	0	211
Airdrie,..... }		512		
Greenock,.....	150	80	0	70
Ayr,	240	126	0	114
Perth,.....	116	80	0	36
Dunfermline,...	30	None.	0	30
Aberdeen,..... }	370	375	0	45
Peterhead,.... }		50		
Dundee,.	132	103	0	29
Arbroath,.....	182	90	0	92
Banff,.....	117	47	0	70
Elgin,.....	34	None.	0	34
Inverness,.. . . .	35	52	17	0
	3786	2983	24	827
Deduct Increase,.....				24
Actual Decrease in 30 years,.....				803

These numbers, copied from the Annual Minutes of Conference for 1819 and 1849, too clearly demonstrate that there are 2 Circuits, and 803 members fewer in the Methodist Church in Scotland now than in 1819, 30 years ago, while there are actually seven ministers less now than in 1817—32 years since, notwithstanding the great increase of the population, and the continued succession of agency and effort during that period; while the following places, which have, at different times, appeared in the list of regular or Branch Circuits, have not only disappeared from these lists, in “The Minutes,” but the greater number are now without the name of Methodist among them, except as a reminiscence of bygone times:—

Brechin.	Hamilton.
Buckie.	Keith.
Campbelton.	Kelso.
Crieff.	Kilmarnock.
Cupar.	Melrose.
Dunfermline.	Port Glasgow.
Elgin.	Wick.
Haddington.	Orkney.

To these must be added a far more numerous class of stations, not named in the Minutes of Conference (as they were not Circuits), where not only Societies existed, and for a time bore fruit, but where, in many cases, Chapels were erected, at no small sacrifice, and afterwards disposed of at still greater, in too many instances with pecuniary loss to the parties concerned. As examples of this far too numerous class, I will only notice a few of the once well-known stations north of Aberdeen, and ask, where are now the Methodists in Newburgh (so honourably mentioned by Mr. Wesley in 1782, and again, in 1784, described by him, “according

to its bigness, the liveliest Society in the kingdom"), Printfield, Fordy, Old Meldrum, Fraserburgh, Huntly, Fochabers, Rothes, and the stations on the Spey (the fruit of the almost apostolic labours of the late Rev. Duncan M'Allum), Forres, Nairn, &c. &c. &c.? The reply is astounding—Gone!—all gone!

While such is the past and present state of Methodism in Scotland, its future prospects are still more discouraging, from the extraordinary decrease of male members, especially among the intelligent and useful class, as well as of the children of Methodists, which has taken place during the last twelve years—a decrease so great that, in the Aberdeen Society (and, I have reason to conclude, to a considerable extent throughout the country), the female members are now in the proportion of about four to one of the males,—a disparity which effectually strikes at the hope of future stability or progress, and which has, in a great measure, been the incontrovertible result of the laws of 1835, which cancelled the concessions of 1797, since, not a few who are now respected office-bearers and members of other churches in this city and elsewhere were, for many years, prior to 1837, useful members and ornaments of the Methodist Church, but resigned in consequence of the laws of 1835; while numerous instances have occurred of young men having been profited by attendance at the Chapels, &c., but who, on becoming acquainted with the polity of Methodism, immediately withdrew, and united themselves to some other section of the Church.

In this attempt to trace the rise, progress, and decline of Methodism in Scotland, I have confined myself to facts which cannot be gainsaid. I therefore feel no small reluctance in leaving this firm vantage ground, to enter upon the debatable ter-

ritory of inquiring into the causes which have operated to produce the depressing aspect which it now presents ; but, as I do not claim the possession of extraordinary sagacity or wisdom, I may be allowed the privilege of frankly stating, not only my observations on Methodism in general, during thirty years that have elapsed since I first received a quarterly ticket of membership, but especially the convictions produced on my mind by the inquiry I was led to institute twenty-two years ago, since which period I have lost no opportunity within my reach of investigating the rise and progress of Methodism in Scotland.

In the course of this inquiry, I have found that the greater number to whom I have addressed the question, especially ministers, resolve the obstacles to the progress of Methodism in this country, into pecuniary and doctrinal. With this solution, however, I can by no means rest satisfied ; for, although it cannot be denied that financial difficulties have hindered the efficiency of the ministry, and have ultimately caused the giving up of a majority of the stations before named, but in a great measure, along with the reaction of the measures adopted by Rev. V. Ward, to promote his Chapel Building Scheme, which led to the extraordinary decrease of membership during the seven years, from 1820, to 1826, and the effects of which have extended to the present time—yet it can be demonstrated, from the history of other churches around us, that these were only the effects of a predisposing cause. Wherever the national energy and perseverance have been enlisted and secured, pecuniary difficulties have not been allowed to stop progress. Witness the unparalleled exertions of the Free Church body. Although not yet seven years in existence, they have planted a church, a manse, and, in many cases, a school-house, in the majority of parishes through-

out the land, with no more debt contracted than will be paid off within the next ten years ; while, besides their noble congregational efforts for city missions, sabbath schools, libraries, local and general institutions, &c., &c., their collections and contributions for the Educational, Missionary, Sustentation, Building, and Congregational Schemes of the Church, have amounted during the past year to £275,081 4s. 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., and, during six years since the formation of that Church, to £1,865,513 16s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., as appears from the following statement :—

1844.....	£366,719	14	3
1845.....	334,483	18	9
1846.....	301,067	5	8
1847.....	311,695	18	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1848.....	276,465	14	5 $\frac{1}{4}$
1849.....	275,081	4	4 $\frac{3}{4}$

Total in six years, £1,865 513 16 1 $\frac{1}{2}$

And, if we include what has been contributed since May last, we have the noble sum of Two Millions, contributed within the period of seven years, for the general schemes of that Church.—Further, I refer to the noble exertions of the Independent or Congregational Churches, during the same period, to get rid of all Chapel debt, in which, notwithstanding a large (doctrinal) secession, they have entirely succeeded. I refer also to the movement in the same direction, of the United Presbyterian Church, which is meeting with so gratifying a response among its members as will very shortly be crowned with similar success. It only adds to the gloomy picture of Scottish Methodism that, amidst all this noble and praiseworthy rivalry which prevails around, it is (with very rare exceptions) unable to catch the stimulus, and attempt the throw-

ing off that incubus of chapel debt which has, for the last thirty years, so crippled its energies, and so sadly discouraged its ministers, office-bearers, and members.

While writing this, I felt gratified by the announcement* of the effort making in Glasgow to reduce £1000 of that debt which has so long paralyzed that Circuit; and I shall rejoice to hear of its complete success, well knowing that this and too many similar instances of heavy chapel debts were originally, to a great extent, forced on an unwilling, and, in some cases, a resisting people, by the ministers appointed by, and acting under the authority of, the Conference, thus alienating the affection, and causing the secession of very many of the most sincere friends of Methodism throughout this country. And, in addition to the actual loss of much unburdened property previously possessed by the Connexion, they entailed such a burden of debt on the present generation as to press upon the connexional funds for relief and assistance, to meet interest of borrowed money or extravagant feu or ground rent, to such an extent as not merely to nauseate the Chapel Relief Committees, but to frighten the Conference, on whom the very announcement of Scotch chapel debt falls as a note of alarm, and thereby dishearten and defeat even the attempt to submit any project for the removal of that crushing load which English Methodism has laid upon it; but which, were their warm-hearted and generous friends south of the Tweed fully made aware of the circumstances attending its original imposition and present extent and influence, they would doubtless feel it incumbent upon them to assist in removing, at least to the extent to which they so nobly and generously assisted the Free Church, when their sympathies were enlisted in its behalf a few years ago.

* *Watchman*, 20th Feb., 1850.

As is stated in announcing the praiseworthy effort in Glasgow, this proves that "the statement made elsewhere, that all Scotland has declared against Conference, is not true, seeing the largest and most important Circuit in it has neither time nor inclination for such a course." I may therefore be allowed to glance at the condition of this, truly "the largest and most important Circuit," and show how it affects the position assumed by me with regard to the progress and prospects of Methodism in Scotland. What then has been the progress of Methodism in the Glasgow Circuit during the last thirty years? In 1819, its field was circumscribed to Glasgow and Paisley as the centre, and extended only to Hamilton on the east, to Johnstone on the west, with Kirkintilloch, Campsie, and Kilsyth on the north, among a population under 200,000, with a Society of 1620 members. After the lapse of thirty years, during the latter part of which the field of labour has been extended by the division of the Circuit into "The Glasgow," and "The Airdrie" Circuits, amidst the densely populated parts of Lanark, Dumbarton, Stirling, Clackmannan, and the eastern part of Renfrewshire, including a population of upwards of 500,000, the total members in both circuits are now reduced to 1409, or 211 members less than were in the original Circuit in 1819; since which period the population of Glasgow and Paisley alone have increased from 194,000 to nearly 400,000, exclusive of the large population in the Airdrie Circuit altogether.

There must, therefore, have been some powerful counteracting influences at work on this extraordinary state of the very class for whom Methodism is so peculiarly adapted, viz.—a manufacturing and mining population. Such an enlargement of its field of operation ought to have told powerfully on the progress of Methodism in the West of Scot-

land, not merely from the ordinary increase of the families in the Church, but from the immigration of many Methodists and children of Methodists from England and Ireland, who, having located themselves in that district, are included in this great increase of population. Surely in such a wide field, cultivated by an active evangelical ministry, assisted by a zealous and self-denying lay agency, with the gracious visitations of the Holy Spirit's reviving influences, we might have expected vastly greater results.

But have these gracious influences been restrained during the past thirty years? O! could the walls of the chapels, vestries, &c., of John Street, Green street, &c., in Glasgow, Storrie Street, in Paisley, as also Airdrie, Kirkintilloch, Kilsyth, Wallaceton, &c. &c., bear witness, how loudly would they proclaim that, during that period, "The Lord's arm has not been shortened that it could not save, neither has His ear been heavy that it could not hear," for many, many have been born there during the last thirty years.

It is, therefore, time that these counteracting influences were discovered, and their removal attempted; and the more so, if they are the direct results of this very increase of Methodism from England and Ireland acting injuriously on the original Societies, by bringing national habits, feelings and usages into conflict at the Quarterly and Leaders' Meetings, &c., thereby exciting and keeping an English and Scotch party feeling, altogether antagonistic to the prosperity of the Church, and thus, with the load of debt, disheartening and paralysing effort in all, and at the same time driving off many whose co-operation spiritual and temporal secured, might have actually aided in removing that burden and extending the boundaries of the Church.

This was in reality the opinion of the lamented

Rev. Thomas Bridgeman, eighteen years ago ; for, in an official conversation with him (only about three weeks before his decease, in April, 1832), as chairman of the District, relative to an application to the District Meeting for the re-union of the Glasgow and Paisley Circuits, he mentioned that the (then recent) visit of the Rev. V. Ward from Madeley to Glasgow, regarding the proposed sale of Tradeston Chapel, had produced a decided change in his mind as to the necessity that had arisen for an immediate adaptation of Methodism here to Scottish habits and peculiarities, and a separation of conflicting English and Scotch feelings ; to carry out which (if I understood him aright), he was prepared to recommend the formation of two distinct Methodist Societies in Glasgow, viz.—a Scotch Society, having John Street and Calton for their chapels ; and an English Society, with Bridge Street, and, I believe, Anderston, for their chapels. He entered into no particulars as to his plan for adapting Methodism to our national habits, but merely in general terms expressed his determination to bring the matter before the District Meeting the following month, and the Conference in August ; but, alas ! before either of them arrived he was suddenly called hence.

I may here add my own conviction, that should the day ever come when Scotland will obtain a restoration of the Church system which Mr. Wesley conferred upon it in 1785, it must necessarily be accompanied by some measure similar to that hinted at by the late Mr. Bridgeman, viz.—the formation and recognition by Conference of a distinct English Methodist Society in Scotland, especially in Glasgow, altogether independent of the Scotch District Meeting or Synod, which might be effected by attaching it to the Newcastle or Carlisle District, thus removing one of the greatest obstacles to the restoration of what the

past history of this Church clearly proves must be speedily conceded, if Methodism is to retain a name and a place among the Churches in Scotland.

Too often have I been grieved by the strong contrasts between English and Scotch liberality, which I have heard drawn by ministers and others, who entirely overlooked the different circumstances in which the people are respectively placed, as regards wealth and station. Taking these circumstances into account, the poor Scotch members give far more for the support of the Methodist ministry, &c., than their more favoured brethren of the south. For instance, Aberdeen, which, from 1815 to 1821, was entirely self-supporting, while maintaining two, and, for years, three ministers, by about 370 members, required no aid from the Contingent Fund, except a grant in 1817, which was required solely by the extraordinary and unjustifiable proceedings of the Rev. Joshua Bryan's attempt to break up the Aberdeen Society, for which he was suspended by a special District Meeting in December, 1816. In 1822, it was again necessitated to receive aid, from the Rev. V. Ward's imprudent speculation relative to the Aberdeen chapel, and his entailment of the heavy annual rent of the King Street feu, until 1830; when, in addition to having aided Peterhead, at the time of its breaking up as a Circuit, and the sale of its chapel, and with a debt of £840 on the Aberdeen chapel to contend with, it ceased to require aid, and besides, at a very considerable expense, re-furnished the minister's house, introduced gas into the chapel, and was able, in 1834, to apply for, and maintain a third minister, by 442 members, as it continued to do until 1837, when the secession of some of its leading members, caused by the legislation of 1835, necessitated a renewal of aid, varying from £60 to £25 ever since, although the mem-

bers, &c. contribute regularly with a willingness that has too few imitators among the more wealthy and influential Societies elsewhere. I shall enter into some details in regard to the Aberdeen Society and congregation. Though composed exclusively of the working and poorer classes, without any rich member among them, insomuch that I have heard their united incomes from all sources calculated at a sum below the average of eight shillings per week ! (an estimate which, from my general knowledge of their circumstances, I believe to be pretty correct); and though, together with communicants and seatholders, only numbering in all about 290, yet their annual contributions have not, in any year, fallen below

Ordinary contributions for minister,	£148
Yearly, July, and Worn-out Ministers' Collection,	12
Connexional and Local Charity Collections,	10
Sacramental Collections for Poor, &c.,	15
For three Sabbath Schools, Tract Society, and Missions,*	45
Seat Rents, and Trustees' Collection,	65
Total,	£295

Or, an annual average contribution of fully £1 for every member, communicant, and seatholder in Longacre Chapel. Besides this, they actually contributed £146 2s. of £250 raised towards reducing their Chapel debt in 1848, and about £60 in 1849, for heating and lighting the Chapel, and improving the vestry. A candid consideration of this plain and correct statement will demonstrate that, were there no primary hindrances, financial embarrassment would not have been allowed, in this country, for thirty years, to retard the progress and prosperity of the Church.

I have met with not a few who keenly contend

* Only the estimated proportion actually contributed by the regular sitters in Longacre Chapel for missions, &c., is stated here.

that the Arminian doctrines of Methodism have proved, and ever will prove the great barrier to its progress in this Calvinistic country ; and, in proof of this, they revert triumphantly to the first and most effective check which early Methodism received by the bitter Calvinistic controversy, occasioned by Mr. Hervey's Letters of 1765, entirely overlooking the great change which has taken place in the relations in which the Methodists stand to other churches since that time. Then, they were members within the pale of the Established or Secession Churches, attending their regular ministry, and participating in their sacraments and privileges, as well as amenable to their established discipline. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at, that the ministers and elders of those churches should have taken the alarm, and resolutely opposed the spread of doctrines and church order altogether at variance with their standards and Confession of Faith, among so many of their members, who, while they retained their position in, and claimed the privileges of their own churches, yet rallied round, and acknowledged their connection with the Methodist preachers. But this relationship has, for the last sixty-five years, ceased to exist, and, during that time, a great evangelical change has taken place in the Established and other churches ; while, within the last twelve years, a still greater change has taken place on the religious mind of this country. So far, therefore, from an Evangelical Arminianism proving a barrier to the prosperity and spread of the Methodist or any other church in Scotland, I feel firmly persuaded that precisely the reverse is the case ; for, what is the great doctrinal question which has, for some years past, agitated the religious mind of Scotland ?—Why, *the Extent of the Atonement*. What has rent the Congregational, and, for a time, threatened the entire breaking up of the Secession

Churches?—*The Extent of the Atonement.* Nor has the Free Church remained entirely unmoved by this important question; while the New Congregational body, which only five years ago separated from the Congregational Union on this very question, already numbers forty-one churches, with twenty-six ministers and four preachers, and, in Aberdeen, have about 450 members, who have built a large and elegant chapel, with comparatively little more debt on it than still rests on the Methodist Chapel, although the cost of the former, including purchase of the ground, was upwards of £2,000—and while the Evangelical Union, formed by the Rev. James Morrison of Kilmarnock, holding similar doctrines, but with a Presbyterian church order, already numbers nineteen churches, with seven ministers, which number will be rapidly increased, as they have established a regular Theological Institution for training young men for the ministry, of which the Rev. James Morrison of Kilmarnock is professor of Exegetical, and the Rev. J. Guthrie of Glasgow, of Practical Theology.

I may be asked, why, then, amid this general and anxious inquiry after its standard doctrines, has Methodism, instead of prospering, shewn such symptoms of decline? I blush for the reply which truth and candour force from me,—that, while the different churches in this country have not shunned to give forth a certain sound on their doctrinal peculiarities, and to proclaim from the pulpit the testimony they consider themselves called on to bear, the Methodist ministers here seem to have forgotten the special end of their high vocation, viz. :—to proclaim to perishing sinners a *full, free, present, and assured salvation, through faith in the Lord Jesus, by the agency of the Holy Spirit,* together with the fatal consequences of *resisting and finally quenching* His influences; and, in Scot-

land especially, to shun not to cry aloud, in season and out of season,

“For ALL, for ALL, my Saviour died !”

Instead of this, there has, too generally, been an inclination to announce the sentiments expressed by the Rev. W. M. Bunting, in the General Assembly of the Free Church, in 1845, that “in the standard current theological literature of the Methodist connexion, amidst many extreme and strong statements on particular matters formerly in dispute between Arminians and Calvinists, on views of the Gospel, and amidst old controversies now passed away, abundant proof is afforded, that between the Wesleyan Methodists and the Free Church there exists a blessed and essential unity of faith.” That, on all the essential doctrines of the Gospel there does exist a general agreement, I cheerfully admit; yet it cannot be denied that, between the Westminster Confession of Faith (the Standard of the Free and other Presbyterian Churches in this country) and the standard literature of the Methodist Church, there is, and ever has been, a great difference on the extent of the gospel remedy, the resistibility of divine grace, and other topics. Now, the doctrines on which the difference exists are the very doctrines which Scotland has, for the last ten or twelve years, especially been panting after, and which the Methodist ministers are neglecting prominently to declare. How many persons (members of other Churches) have I known, who, after having been aroused to the inquiry as to the extent of the atonement, and after having attended for a time the Methodist Chapel, in the hope of having their doubts on such subjects removed, have gone away, expressing surprise and disappointment at finding no difference between the doctrines preached in

their own and in the Methodist Church, the peculiar doctrines of an evangelical Arminianism having been so seldom brought forward, or even hinted at.

Nor has the evil ended here; for, in many instances, it has happened that an estrangement of kindly feeling has sprung up between ministers and office-bearers, when the latter, actuated by the purest motives and the warmest regard, have represented to the minister, in the Leaders' or Quarterly Circuit Meeting, the necessity for a more distinct enunciation from the Methodist pulpit of those great doctrines which are contained in the connexional standards, during this season of earnest inquiry. They have found, to their extreme surprise, regret, and indignation, their sincere and simple effort to promote the efficiency of the ministry, and the consequent prosperity of the Church, strangely construed into an unwarrantable and offensive interference with the pastoral authority, or, what is still more painful, into a direct personal attack on the minister; and, hence his appeal to the meeting for protection from such assaults!!! This feeling has, in far too many instances, hitherto operated, and, I regret to add, still continues to operate against the best interests of the Church, by destroying mutual confidence and co-operation between ministers and office-bearers, and thus mar-
ring its unity and aggressive usefulness.

In accounting for the instability of Methodism here, there are not a few who ascribe it solely to the systematic change of ministers amongst us, and the consequent breaking up of the pastoral relation, which is nowhere regarded with greater sacredness than in this country. This frequent change of ministers, they contend, gives a character of uncertainty and unsettledness to the Church, and thus tends to deter reflecting persons from uniting themselves to it. I believe there is good reason for the admission of this as one of the

causes of the want of progress ; and I have long considered it possible to get the law, which limits the itinerancy of Methodism in England to two or three years in one place, in some measure relaxed as regards Scotland, if a distinct jurisdiction were awarded to its District Meeting or Synod.

I shall now notice the remaining cause which I have so often heard adduced as accounting for our want of success, viz, :—the non-adaptation of Methodism, as a spiritual system, to the national character of Scotland. I have already remarked that experience does not warrant such an assumption. But if the term “ecclesiastical” were substituted for “spiritual,” I believe the true cause would then be correctly stated ; for, there does exist no adaptation of the ecclesiastical polity of Methodism to the national character of Scotland, whose whole history, for the last 300 years, has been one continued and successful struggle for the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ as King and Head of His Church, and for the Christian privileges as well as the civil and religious freedom of its members, in opposition equally to the encroachment of civil rulers and the assumption of priestly power and domination ; which struggle has resulted, to a great extent, in the acknowledgment of the right of the members of the various churches in this country to choose their own pastors and office-bearers, in committing to ministers and lay elders the government of the church, and in the admission into the church courts of the public generally, and of reporters for the press ; while these courts are equally accessible to the office-bearers and members, at all times, and under all circumstances, by appeal, petition, memorial, or overture. This popular liberty, so far from degrading the ministerial character, has elevated and endeared it to the hearts and affections of the people to an extent far beyond what prevails elsewhere ; and,

instead of militating against the spiritual bond that should always exist between the minister and his flock, or in the most remote degree encroaching on the pastor's duties and Scriptural authority, has cemented the union and interests of pastors and people, and confirmed the loyalty and attachment of all to their heart-cherished institutions, as was, to an unprecedented extent, demonstrated by the noble, self-denying, and combined efforts of the ministers, elders, and members, now constituting the Free Church, during a struggle of ten years, to preserve inviolate both the spiritual independence of the Church against State control, and the rights and privileges of the people. This struggle continued till 1843, and led to the noble spectacle of nearly 500 ministers resigning their assured livings and manses, and, along with the majority of the people, seceding from the most popularly constituted Established Church in Europe; while such an unparalleled act of disinterested faith and confidence on the part of the ministers has, as we have already seen, been so nobly responded to on the part of the people.

A candid consideration of these principles and facts, and a comparison of them with the constitution and usages of Methodism, which exclude the members from a choice of Pastor and Office-bearers, and even from petitioning Conference, except on the ground of personal grievance, and, more especially, with the laws of 1835, which restrict the liberty of memorial for any change to the Stewards and Trustees, and to the Leaders and Local Preachers of ten years' continuous standing in their offices! together with the entire absence of popular representation, or lay officers in the Conference, will fully justify my proposition, that there exists no adaptation in the ecclesiastical polity of Methodism to the national character of the people of Scotland.

It cannot be denied that the introductory con-

dition and subsequent test of church membership in the Methodist Church, viz. :—Meeting in Class, instead of application through the Minister, for admission to the Communion of the Lord's Supper, as in other Churches, has proved a great barrier to the spread of that church in this country. But we have already seen that a return to Mr. Wesley's adaptation of Methodism to this country would entirely remove this barrier, while it would preserve Class, Band, and Fellowship Meetings, in all their integrity.

I have avoided using the term "Wesleyan Methodist," not from any wish to generalise, but from the impossibility of using that term as applicable to Scotland, during the last fifty years. In support of this startling statement, I refer with unfeigned and heartfelt pleasure to the following extract from the "The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," for January, 1849, large edition, p. 74 :—

"It is a capital mistake to suppose that Methodism has failed in Scotland. Methodism never has failed, and never can fail, so long as it continues to be Wesleyan Methodism. Had the arrangements of our venerated founder regarding Scotland been faithfully adhered to and efficiently carried out, the direct effects of the system would, in all probability, have been much more extensive. It is well known that Mr. Wesley adapted Methodism to the peculiarities of Scotland. Episcopalian though he was, he formed what may be designated a Scottish Presbyterian Wesleyan Methodist Church, because he was fully convinced that such a system was best suited to the country. By so doing, he did not interfere with a single essentially important principle of Methodism. It still retained its identity."

On reading this first candid admission I have met with in the connexional literature of the extent and fitness of the "step taken with regard to Scot-

land" by Mr. Wesley, in 1785, I felt a thrill of delight, and sung in joyful anticipation,

"Thou shalt arise, and mercy have
Upon thy Sion yet ;
The time to favour her has come,
'The time which thou hast set."

But, alas ! the present aspect of the connexion and the position assumed by the ministers too plainly indicate that this hope is far too bright to admit of a speedy realization.

Yet, often has the question arisen within me, Are there none of Scotia's sons in the Methodist ministry imbued with a portion of the national enthusiasm, or clannishness, as it is in derision called ; or, are they entirely destitute of that heaven-inspired love for their country's dearly won and blood-bought Christian rights and liberties, and of that truly noble spirit of patriotic sacrifice which not only led their forefathers, in contending for those rights and liberties, fearlessly to meet the scaffold and the stake, but has, in our own day, induced their worthy descendants in other Churches to make such sacrifices as astonished Christendom has gazed on with admiration, that hitherto they have lacked the moral courage to imitate the illustrious example ? Or, has their sense of obligation to Methodism in Scotland become so enfeebled by their residence and enjoyment in the more luxuriant south, that they will not arouse themselves to make one effort to restore the boon which the venerated Mr. Wesley, sixty-five years ago, conferred on it, rather than withdraw Methodism from Scotland, at the request of his preachers !—the boon, viz., of Methodism adapted to the peculiar wants of the country, or, in other words, "a Scottish Wesleyan Methodist Church," and thereby be the honoured instruments of handing down the doctrines, ordinances, and institutions of Methodism, to bless the future generations of their fa-

therland, for the reception of which the religious mind of the country seems so providentially prepared? Or, will they, in their anxiety to conserve and uphold the Methodism of 1835, stand still and look complacently on, while one station after another is dropped, and one chapel after another is given up, and one Society after another is dissolved, and one Circuit after another is discontinued, in the minutes of Conference, until, it may be, that only Edinburgh, Glasgow, and a few other places remain, to tell that that Methodism to which they owe their present status and usefulness in society once had a footing from the Solway Frith to John O'Groat's; but that, through the withdrawal of the system so wisely planned and generously bequeathed by Mr. Wesley, together with the long-continued neglect of adaptation to the national character and wants, and the series of futile attempts, during fifty-seven years, again to assimilate English and Scotch Methodism, and all this by the concurrence and support of Scotchmen in the Methodist ministry, the very element of strength and stability is cut off; so that, instead of fairly and boldly taking its status as a Church adapted to the requirements of this age and country, as it ought, at the commencement of the second centenary of its existence in Scotland, it only presents to the Churches around us the humiliating and mortifying aspect of "a feeble branch of a noble institution, adapted, it may be, for England and the rest of the world, but not at all for Scotland," where even its present designation, "Methodist Society," instead of "Methodist Church," militates against it.

O that the mantle of a Knox or of a Chalmers would descend on some of my countrymen in the Methodist ministry, and arouse them to assist, ere it be too late, in lifting up the head and reviving the energies of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Scotland!